



NEWS MEDIA ADVISORY

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CALIFORNIA CONDORS TO BE RELEASED IN NORTHERN ARIZONA

Reward Offered for Information in Condor Death

On September 25, 2002, biologists from The Peregrine Fund will release four additional California Condors on top of the Vermilion Cliffs, near the Grand Canyon, in Northern Arizona. Three other condors will be released later this year.

The addition of four of North America's largest bird in northern Arizona will increase the population of free-flying California Condors in Arizona to 31. All four hatched at The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey (three hatched in 2001 and one in 2000). The condors arrived at the release site in November of 2001 and May of 2002. Three are males and one is a female.

"The recovery of the California Condor continues to make steady progress," stated Bill Burnham, Ph.D., President of The Peregrine Fund. "The keys to this progress are the habitat and the community support provided in Northern Arizona and Southern Utah," finished Burnham.

"The continued success of the California Condor program reflects the hard work and cooperation among a number of private and governmental partners," said Roger Taylor, BLM Arizona Strip Field Manager. "We're proud the BLM's Vermilion Cliffs National Monument can play an important role in this historic reintroduction."

"Visitors to Grand Canyon National Park continue to be delighted by the sight of condors soaring near the rim," stated Joseph Alston, Superintendent of Grand Canyon National Park. Adding, "Condors from previous releases have nested three times in northern Arizona at Grand Canyon, which has provided an exceptional opportunity for expanding public awareness regarding conservation of rare species, while adding to the overall experience for visitors."

Although the condors have not yet fledged any young, we hope that as the adults become more experienced they will become more successful at raising young and establishing a self-sustaining population."

"The Arizona Game and Fish Department is thrilled about the continued success of the project which reflects the deep and sincere support expressed by the conservation community, private landowners, and local public land leasees," said Steve Ferrell, Deputy Director, Arizona Game and Fish Department.

"These releases bring us closer to the condor's self-sustaining recovery in the wild. The partnership for condor recovery represents a collaborative community working toward the successful conservation of an impressive species," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Southwest Regional Director Dale Hall.

Since their arrival from Idaho, the condors have been maturing and acclimating to their new surroundings in a large release facility on top of the cliff. After they are released, the birds are expected to stay close to the release site and slowly explore their new home. Regular updates are being provided on The Peregrine Fund's home page (www.peregrinefund.org).

The historic Arizona reintroduction is a joint project between The Peregrine Fund, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, National Park Service, Southern Utah's Coalition of Resources and Economics, and numerous other partners. The Peregrine Fund, a non-profit conservation organization, is conducting and securing the funding for the release, the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management are managing the habitat, Fish and Wildlife Service is responsible for the overall recovery of the species, and The Arizona Game and Fish Department is responsible for management of wildlife in the state.

The California Condors are being released as a "non-essential/experimental population" under section 10(j) of the Endangered Species Act. Section 10(j) provides that the species can be released in an area without impacting current or future land use planning. This authority has been spelled out further in an innovative agreement between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and local governments. This "Implementation Agreement" spells out a positive working relationship between the Federal government and the various local governments.

Reward

Three partners in the California Condor Recovery Program are offering awards for information regarding the recent death of a rare California Condor. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is offering a reward of up to \$10,000 as is The Peregrine Fund. The Arizona Game and Fish Department is offering up to \$1,000.

It is believed that California Condor #186 died sometime between August 28 and 30 in the Kaibab National Forest in northwestern Arizona. Condor #186 a male, was hatched at the Los

Angeles Zoo on April 15, 1998. He was transported to The Peregrine Fund's Hurricane Cliffs release site on the 8th of October 1998 and released with eight other condors on November 18th of the same year. This condor was expected to begin breeding at the normal age (six or seven years).

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful should call: U.S.Fish and Wildlife Service special agent in Mesa, AZ at (480) 835-8289 , The Peregrine Fund at (208) 362-3716 or Arizona Game and Fish Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700.

On September 1, 2002, there were 205 California Condors in the world, 73 of those are in the wild in California and Arizona.

To obtain video or still images of California Condors, please contact:

Jeff Humphrey, USFWS, 602-242-0210
Gary Schafer, AZ Game and Fish, 602-789-3232
Linda Behrman, The Peregrine Fund, 208-362-3811

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The Peregrine Fund

WORLD CENTER FOR BIRDS OF PREY

Focusing on birds to conserve nature

CALIFORNIA CONDOR (Gymnogyps californianus) FACT SHEET

- SIZE:** Weight: 16 to 24 pounds
Wingspan: Up to 9.5 feet (3 meters)
Body Length: 46 to 55 inches
- VOICE:** None, but may grunt or wheeze
- NEST SITE:** Usually a cave in a cliff or a crevice among boulders on a steep slope.
- REPRODUCTION:** In 2002, three young were produced in the wild in California and two eggs were laid in Arizona. These are the first successful hatches in the wild since the early 1980s. Condors reach sexual maturity and attain adult plumage and coloration by 5-6 years of age and breeding is likely between 6-8 years of age. When mature, a condor will lay one egg (average incubation period for a condor egg is 56 days) every other year during a successful nesting cycle. The species provides extensive parental care to very few young.
- FOOD SUPPLY:** Historically, carcasses of bison, elk or deer in inland areas. Seals and beached whales along coasts. With fluctuating populations of wild game, the condor has adapted to utilizing carcasses of domestic animals too.
- RANGE:** Occurred historically from British Columbia south to northern Baja California and in other parts of southwestern United States. Has ability to travel 150 miles a day in search of food.
- POPULATION:** On September 1, 2002, there were 205 California Condors in the world -- 73 in the wild in California and Arizona. In 1982, there were 22 California Condors in the world.
- YOUNG:** Nestlings fledge (leave nest) full grown at six months of age, however, historically juvenile condors may be dependant on their parents for more than a year. Reintroduced condors are released on their own and must learn to forage and survive with the now existing free-flying population.
- SEXES:** There is no sexual dimorphism (observable difference in size or appearance) between males and females.

FEEDING: Condors are strict scavengers. Unlike Turkey Vultures, condors do not have an exceptional sense of smell. They instead find their food visually, often by investigating the activity of ravens, coyotes, eagles, and other scavengers. Without the guidance of their parents, young inexperienced juvenile condors may also investigate the activity of humans. As young condors learn and mature this human directed curiosity diminishes.

IDENTIFICATION: Numbered wing tags, white or mottled triangle under wing, no feathers on head, and head color black in juveniles or orange/pink in adults, not dark red as in Turkey Vultures.

CAUSE OF DECLINE: Unsustainable mortality rate in the wild and a naturally low reproductive rate. Predation, shootings, poisoning, lead poisoning, and collisions with power lines are some of the major threats.

CONDOR ENCOUNTER: Please enjoy the birds from a distance. Do not approach or attempt to feed a condor. **Never feed, shoot, or throw objects at a condor.** The California Condor, hawks, eagles, vultures, and owls are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty and the Endangered Species Act. Under these acts it is illegal to pursue, hunt take, capture, kill, or attempt to do any of these activities to a bird of prey. If a condor approaches you, or you observe anyone harassing or harming a condor, immediately notify:
The Peregrine Fund - (928) 355-2270 (azcondors@aol.com)
Arizona Game & Fish - (928) 774-5045
Bureau of Land Management - (435) 688-3200
National Park Service - (928) 638-7756

If you should observe a condor please report your sighting to Peregrine Fund biologists at (928) 355-2270 or e-mail us at pfund@page.az.net. Helpful information would include date, time, location, number of birds observed, and wing tag numbers if possible.